

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /126 W

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R 240650Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1881

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

CINCPACREP CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5819

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJ: LIBERAL OPPOSITION CENSURE MOTION DEFEATED OCT 23 BUT
DEBATE BRINGS OUT ISSUES FOR NEXT GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

REF: CANBERRA 5740

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN MOVING MOTION OCT 23 CENSURING PERFORMANCE OF LABOR GOVERNMENT, LIBERAL OPPOSITION LEADER SNEDDEN ALLEGED GOVERNMENT FAILED IN MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY, DISASTROUSLY MIS-HANDLED MINING INDUSTRY, NEGLECTED NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE, FAILED TO MAINTAIN INDUSTRIAL STABILITY, DISREGARDED PROPER ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENTS, AND MISMANAGED PARLIAMENT. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM REPLIED, TOUCHING ON OPPOSITION FACTIONALISM, SPLITS BETWEEN LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTIES, DENOUNCED PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES ON VIET-NAM, NOTED PRESENT FULL EMPLOYMENT, AND DENOUNCED FORMER GOVERNMENT FOR PRESENT INFLATION. CENSURE MOTION DEFEATED ON STRAIGHT PARTY LINES, BUT DEBATE OF INTEREST AS FORESHADOWING MAIN LINES OF OPPOSITION ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT IN COMING MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN CENSURE MOTION PROPOSED BY LIBERAL OPPOSITION LEADER

SNEDDEN IN AUSTRALIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OCT 23 MAIN LINES OF OPPOSITION ATTACK ON LABOR GOVERNMENT SET OUT IN DEBATE. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ACCEPTED CHALLENGE TO DEBATE ON MOTION AND THEN GAGGED DEBATE AFTER FOUR HOURS, WITH MOTION DEFEATED ON PARTY LINE VOTE, 60 TO 55. SHORT OF MASSIVE BREAKDOWN IN LABOR PARTY DISCIPLINE OR AGREEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER TO MOVE TO IMMEDIATE GENERAL ELECTIONS, MOTION COULD NOT HAVE PASSED.

3. MOTION PRESENTED BY SNEDDEN STATED LABOR GOVERNMENT NO LONGER HAS CONFIDENCE OF HOUSE BECAUSE OF MISMANAGEMENT OF NATION, PARTICULARLY: A) FAILURE TO EXERCISE PROPER ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT; B) DISASTROUS HANDLING OF MINING INDUSTRY; C) NEGLECT OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE; D) FAILURE TO EXERCISE INFLUENCE IN MAINTENANCE OF INDUSTRIAL STABILITY; E) DISREGARD FOR THE PROPER ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN STATE GOVERNMENTS; AND F) MISMANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENT.

4. IN REPLY, PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM PLAYED WITH SKILL ON PAST INSTANCES OF FACTIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FORMER PRIME MINISTER GORTON AND MCMAHON, SPLITS BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTIES ON INDUSTRIAL AND TARIFF ISSUES, DENOUNCED THE LIBERAL-COUNTRY COALITION FOR ITS POLICIES ON VIET-NAM, NOTED PRESENT FULL EMPLOYMENT AND BLAMED INFLATION ON POLICIES OF LIBERAL-COUNTRY GOVERNMENT. MAJOR GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION FIGURES TOOK PART IN DEBATE, BUT FEW NEW THEMES MENTIONED. DEBATE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST AS FORESHADOWING LINE OF OPPOSITION ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT OVER NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS.

5. COMMENT: EDITORIAL COMMENT LIMITED, WITH USUALLY PRO-LABOR COLUMNISTS CONCLUDING SNEDDEN HAD NOT SHOWN UP WELL IN DEBATE, THOUGH CONCEDED THAT HIS SPEECH READ BETTER THAN IT SOUNDED. DEBATE TOOK PLACE FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OCT 21 OF NEW POLL BY AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS WHICH SHOWED THAT, AS OF EARLY OCTOBER, ALP HAD 42 PERCENT OF VOTE, LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTIES HAD 49 PERCENT, DLP HAD 3 PERCENT, WHILE AUSTRALIA PARTY HAD 5 PERCENT. POLL CONCLUDED LABOR GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN SOUNDLY BEATEN IF ELECTIONS HAD BEEN HELD IN EARLY OCTOBER.
GREEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: smithrj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CANBER05819
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS GREEN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731015/aaaaalbo.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CANBERRA 5740
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: smithrj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <13-Dec-2001 by smithrj>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LIBERAL OPPOSITION CENSURE MOTION DEFEATED OCT 23 BUT DEBATE BRINGS OUT ISSUES FOR NEXT GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN
TAGS: PINT, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005